

REMARKS

Status of the Claims

Claims 1-3, 5-12 and 15-19 are pending in this application, the independent claims being claims 1, 5-10, 18 and 19. By this Amendment, claim 1 is amended and claims 13 and 14 are canceled.

Summary of the Official Action

In the Official Action, claims 1, 13 and 15 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e), as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,684,627 (Mizuno).

Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection respectfully are requested in view of the above amendments and the following remarks.

Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants gratefully acknowledge the Examiner's indication that the application contains allowable subject matter, that claims 5-12, 18 and 19 are allowed, and that claims 2, 3, 14, 16 and 17 are allowable over the prior art.

Claim Amendments

The rejection of the claims over the cited art respectfully is traversed. Nevertheless, without conceding the propriety of the rejection, and solely to advance prosecution of this application to issue, independent claim 1 has been amended to recite the features of dependent claim 14, and dependent claims 13 and 14 have been canceled in lieu thereof. No new matter has been added.

For the above reasons, Applicants submit that claim 1 is allowable over the cited art.

Claims 2, 3, 13 and 15-17 depend from claim 1 and are believed allowable for the same reasons. Moreover, each of these dependent claims recites additional features in combination with the features recited in base claim 1 and is believed allowable in its own right. Individual consideration of the dependent claims respectfully is requested.

Entry of Amendment Under 37 C.F.R. §1.116

Entry of the amendments is proper under 37 CFR §1.116 since the amendments: (a) place the application in condition for allowance (for the reasons discussed herein); (b) do not raise any new issue requiring further search and/or consideration (since the amendments amplify issues previously discussed throughout prosecution); (c) satisfy a requirement of form asserted in the previous Office Action; (d) do not present any additional claims without canceling a corresponding number of finally rejected claims; and (e) place the application in better form for appeal, should an appeal be necessary. The amendments are necessary and were not earlier presented because they are made in response to arguments raised in the final rejection. Entry of the amendments is thus respectfully requested.

Conclusion

Applicants believe that the present Amendment is responsive to each of the points raised by the Examiner in the Official Action, and submit that the application is in condition for allowance. Favorable consideration of the claims and passage to issue of the application at the Examiner's earliest convenience earnestly are solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,

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Date: December 2, 2005

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